FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Science and Technology Sub Committee

Finding: A synthesis of research efforts is needed to be available in a centralized place so that fire practitioners and regulatory agencies have a common understanding of the most recent scientific information pertaining to fuel reduction projects. Specifically, there is a need to advance our understanding and develop strategies for implementing fuel reduction activities in sensitive habitats (i.e. Stream Environment Zone's (SEZ's) or steep slopes), evaluate the economics of fuel reduction efforts, and to develop and conduct a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program for these activities.

Background and Supporting Evidence: Wildfire hazard is a significant concern and threat to human and natural resources within the Lake Tahoe Basin. Of particular concern are the wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas where homes and development co-exist within the wildland vegetation (Carey and Shumman, 2003). In addition, resource managers are concerned about the impacts these fires may have on natural resources, lake clarity and ecological systems such as habitats, water cycling and carbon sequestration. The imminent nature of the fuel hazard problem has been repeatedly recognized by many high profile efforts including the California and Nevada's Governor Blue Ribbon Lake Tahoe Fire Commission of 2007, the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI), the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), and the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA)-White Pine Amendment to facilitate fuel reduction projects to alleviate existing fuel loads across the landscape. For this reason, the *Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy* proposes to conduct fuel reduction projects on 68,000 acres over the next decade. To accomplish this ambitious goal, partners will have to consider new technologies, practices and policies that have unknown impacts to other important policy goals in the Tahoe Basin, such as lake clarity, wildlife habitats and sensitive vegetation communities such as old growth and riparian vegetation. A common understanding of the most recent scientific information will help all parties accomplish the ambitious fuel reduction goal in ways that also protect other valued resources.

Recommendation(s)

1. **Workshop on Fuel Reduction in Sensitive Habitats:** Utilize the leadership of the Tahoe Science Consortium (TSC) to hold a workshop focused on the topic of fuels reductions in sensitive habitats in the Tahoe Basin. This workshop should utilize the expertise from relevant agencies, UC Cooperative Extension, the TSC and a panel of four outside experts (with expertise in soils, hydrology, wetland habitat, and silviculture/fuel treatments) who would participate in the workshop and provide a written product summarizing the issues and recommendations for advancing the strategies to reduce excess fuel loads in sensitive areas.

2. **Create a Centralized Data Base for Documents on Fuel/Fire Related Research**: Develop web enabled centralized database that allows fire practitioners to access documents of the most recent scientific findings related to Fuel and Fire management in the Lake Tahoe Basin. As research is conducted relating to Fuel and Fire Management with in the Lake Tahoe basin, the results of such activities are mandated to be documented, summarized and uploaded to the centralized database. These reports need to be understood by the average lay person and be applicable to the fire practitioners. The Tahoe Integrated Information Management System (TIIMS) infrastructure could be utilized to support this effort, however there would need to be some level of funding to develop the backend database and web pages.

3. **Create and Implement a Comprehensive Fuel Treatment Monitoring and Assessment Program:** This comprehensive monitoring program will need to track, assess and evaluate the extent of activities, fuel treatment effectiveness, cost effectiveness, regulatory compliance, and environmental protection. Annual reports of these activities should be synthesized and presented to the Lake Tahoe Interagency Executive (TIE) and/or the Interagency Fuel Reduction Committee on an annual basis.

4. Conduct Economic Assessment/Research of Fuel Reduction activities.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas)***:**

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

Cost: Unknown, the costs will depends on the level of detail the monitoring and evaluation program is designed to accomplish in addition to the questions it is attempting to answer.

Funding: Redirect a portion of existing project funds for monitoring and assessment or provide a new funding source to support these activities in a integrated and comprehensive way

Staffing: Use existing personnel, or add a mandate that will all existing funding provided for projects that a % of money would be set aside to hire staff/group to conduct these activities in a non biased way.

Existing Regulations/Laws: Would comply with existing project approval conditions, but improve our ability to conduct adaptive management therefore improving future implementation project designs.

Staffing: Use existing staffs, or add with funding provided through projects.

Existing regulations/laws: Would comply with existing project approval conditions, but improve adaptive management by improving effectiveness monitoring.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency